



February 14, 2019

Senate Finance Committee

Testimony on SB 406: Prenatal and Infant Care Coordination - Grant Funding and Task Force

Alyson Jacobson

Director, Healthy Families Prince George's

Prince George's Child Resource Center, Inc.

9475 Lottsford Road, Suite 202, Largo, MD 20774

(301) 772-8420

ajacobson@pgcrc.org

Position: Support

Prince George's Child Resource Center (PGCRC) has been working tirelessly since 1990 to support both child care providers in their efforts to strive for quality in their child care programs, and parents as they create nurturing environments for their children. Therefore, we are avid supporters of Thrive by Three and were pleased when legislation in support of care coordination passed in 2018. **Now is the time to build on that foundation by adequately funding Thrive by Three.**

PGCRC's home visiting program, accredited by Healthy Families America and funded in part by state dollars, provides support to 170 struggling families a year. Our evidence-based strategies target pregnant moms facing difficult challenges such as isolation, depression, past physical and/or sexual abuse, poverty, substance abuse and domestic violence. We begin working with these moms and their families early to promote healthy birth outcomes and prevent child abuse and neglect.

Investing in care coordination by making grants to counties and municipalities will **increase the yield on the investment you have already made** in home visiting programs across the state. Our staff spends a great deal of time linking families to needed services, which are currently disjointed and often difficult to access. One of the greatest sources of stress, burnout and eventual attrition from home visiting work is caused by knowing exactly what a family needs to address their challenges and simultaneously experiencing the barriers a family faces when trying to access it. Care coordination would increase the effectiveness of our Family Support Specialists, save Maryland precious dollars, and, most importantly, promote healthy outcomes for our most vulnerable children.



Did you know that a mother who signs up for transportation through medical assistance can only take one child to the doctor at a time? Put yourselves in the shoes of a woman who has three sick children. Imagine making separate appointments...choosing which child gets to see the doctor first....even getting vaccinations for twins or an infant/toddler combination (not unusual in our community) suddenly seems insurmountable.

Did you know that in Prince George's County 13% of families speak a language other than English? Imagine an isolated, pregnant mom experiencing anxiety and depression who cannot access mental health services because she is responsible for figuring out who might be able to interpret for her? Common coordination of access to language lines could make a world of difference.

PGCRC has used its own funds to coordinate services when possible. For example, we partnered with a local outpatient clinic to provide both individual and group therapy. We supported the service by providing services in Spanish, child care and limited transportation to eliminate barriers. This coordination resulted in 76% of all participants agreeing to therapeutic services and returning for at least one more session of therapy.

The National Institute of Medicine reports that for every pre-term birth averted saves \$51,600, and prenatal care coordination has been found to reduce preterm birth rates by as much as 17%. Our ability to link our families to coordinated services will help reduce health disparities and improve outcomes for children in our communities so that families can thrive.

In our experience, leaders in Maryland understand that our future relies on the strength of their families and with ongoing financial support for the Thrive by Three Fund, the talented and dedicated leaders, organizations and agencies in Maryland can find ways to ensure that our most vulnerable residents have a coordinated network of services that will help all families thrive.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of SB 406, and PGCRC urges you to offer your support.

Prince George's Child Resource Center helps create healthy and nurturing environments for children by supporting their families and educating their caregivers.